

(12) NACH DEM VERTRAG ÜBER DIE INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT AUF DEM GEBIET DES
PATENTWESENS (PCT) VERÖFFENTLICHTE INTERNATIONALE ANMELDUNG

(19) Weltorganisation für geistiges Eigentum
Internationales Büro



(43) Internationales Veröffentlichungsdatum
10. Mai 2002 (10.05.2002)

PCT

(10) Internationale Veröffentlichungsnummer
WO 02/37516 A2

(51) Internationale Patentklassifikation⁷: **H01H 13/00**

(21) Internationales Aktenzeichen: PCT/EP01/12690

(22) Internationales Anmeldedatum: 2. November 2001 (02.11.2001)

(25) Einreichungssprache: Deutsch

(26) Veröffentlichungssprache: Deutsch

(30) Angaben zur Priorität:
100 54 862.8 6. November 2000 (06.11.2000) DE

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(81) Bestimmungsstaaten (national): JP, US.

(84) Bestimmungsstaaten (regional): europäisches Patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR).

Veröffentlicht:
— ohne internationalen Recherchenbericht und erneut zu veröffentlichen nach Erhalt des Berichts

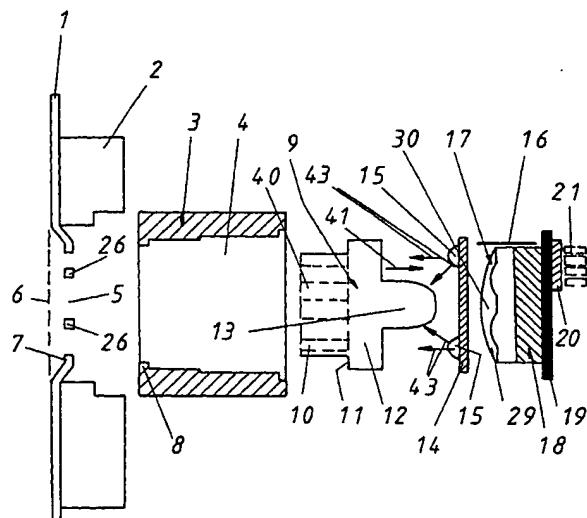
[Fortsetzung auf der nächsten Seite]

(54) Title: ELECTRIC SWITCH, ESPECIALLY A PIEZO SWITCH, WITH OPTICAL AND/OR MECHANICAL FEEDBACK OF THE SWITCHING OPERATION

(54) Bezeichnung: ELEKTRISCHER SCHALTER, INSbesondere PIEZOSCHALTER, MIT OPTISCHER UND/ODER MECHANISCHER RÜCKMELDUNG DES SCHALTVORGANGES



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(57) Abstract: The invention relates to an electric switch, especially a piezo switch, with optical and/or mechanical feedback of the switching operation. The switch contains at least one switching element, especially beneath a cover panel, which can be activated by means of an activating element. This causes a switching signal to be generated and guided out via electrical contacts. The activating element itself is configured in the form of a passive luminous body consisting of an at least translucent material, which can be illuminated by active luminous means. The mechanical feedback of the switching operation can take place using a vibrator which is activated by the switching operation that has been initiated and conveys a vibrating motion to the luminous body.

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appears in parallel with Y_1 is large. After switching to high sensitivity mode, the input g is continuously monitored by the controller U_1 , and the output b of the controller U_1 is switched into a predetermined logical state which is fed into a following circuit and activates it, as long as the pulse level V_e indicates identified human hand vibrations ("1" logical state). When V_e falls to "0" (no vibrations), the output b of the controller U_1 is switched back into the default (disactivating) state.

Figs. 3A and 3B schematically illustrate the voltage of the response signal, at lower and at higher sensitivities, respectively. At lower sensitivity, application of a relatively strong and continuous pressure on the element Y_1 , results in an analogue pulse with relatively strong amplitude (over A_0) and limited duration (shorter than t_0), as shown in Fig. 3A. Fig. 3B shows the same effect, but with switching to higher sensitivity at time point t_1 . The resulting voltage of the response signal is kept over the level A_0 as long as a continuous pressure is applied on the element Y_1 by the operator (i.e., until the time point t_2).

The above examples and description have of course been provided only for the purpose of illustrations, and are not intended to limit the invention in any way. As will be appreciated by the skilled person, the invention can be carried out in a great variety of ways, such as using other elements and/or materials which vary their electric properties in response to applied pressure, employing more than one technique from those described above, all without exceeding the scope of the invention.

3. Method according to claim 1, comprising providing the switch of a derivation to its electronic circuit and passing it from the default to the transitory mode and vice versa by changing increasing and respectively decreasing the resistance of said derivation.

4. Method according to claim 1, which comprises:

- a - providing an electronic circuit, to which the pressure-sensitive element is connected, and a derivation thereof having a normal higher resistance and an alternative lower resistance;
- b - setting amplitude and duration thresholds that must be at least equaled for a pulse to be an activating pulse;
- c - when a voltage pulse is produced by an operator by exerting a pressure on the pressure-sensitive element, limiting and shaping said pulse;
- d - sensing the amplitude and duration of said shaped pulse;
- e - if said amplitude and duration are not below the predetermined thresholds, producing an activating signal;
- f - concurrently, switching the electronic circuit of the switch from the default to the transitory mode by changing the resistance of said derivation from said lower to said higher value;
- g - for each additional pulse above said amplitude threshold, generating an activating signal; and
- h - when no further pulses above said amplitude threshold is sensed for a time exceeding a predetermined duration, returning the resistance of said derivation to its lower value.

5. Method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the pressure-sensitive element is a piezoelectric crystal.
6. Method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the pressure-sensitive switch is a piezoelectric switch.
7. Method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the pressure-sensitive element is a pressure-sensitive resistive combination operating with an applied input voltage, said combination varying its electrical characteristics in response to pressure applied thereon.
8. Method according to claim 7, wherein the pressure-sensitive resistive combination forms a resistor bridge.
9. Method according to claim 7, wherein the pressure-sensitive resistive combination is a pressure-sensitive resistor.
10. Pressure-sensitive switch apparatus, which comprises all the elements of a conventional pressure-sensitive switch, and further comprises means for changing the switch from a default mode to a temporary mode and vice versa.
11. Apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the means for changing the switch from a default mode to a temporary mode and vice versa are such that, as long as the switch is in the default mode, only the deliberate actuation thereof by a pressure exerted by an operator on the

pressure-sensitive element will produce a primary activating pulse; that once such a pulse has been detected and the primary activating pulse has been produced, the switch is passed to the transitory mode, in which the vibrations of an operator's finger are sufficient to produce secondary activating pulses; and once a predetermined time has passed without any activating pulses' being detected, the switch returns to the default mode.

12. Apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the means for passing from the default mode to the transitory mode comprise a high and a low resistance in parallel in the derivation of the electronic circuit of the switch, the low resistance being normally inserted in said derivation; means for inserting the high resistance in place of the low one to pass from the default to the transitory mode; and means for re-inserting the low resistance to return from the transitory to the default mode.

13. Apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the switch comprises a controller and the means for passing from the default mode are embodied in said controller, which is programmed to exchange the high resistance for the low one when it receives the primary activating pulse and to reverse said exchange when it detects that a predetermined time has passed without the production of secondary activating pulses.

14. Apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the low resistance is permanently inserted in the derivation of the electronic circuit and an additional resistance is provided to be inserted to pass the switch from the default to the provisional mode and disinserted to return to the default

mode, the sum of the low and the additional resistances constituting the high resistance.

15. Apparatus according to any one of claims 11 to 14, in which the pressure-sensitive element is a piezoelectric crystal.

16. Apparatus according to any one of claims 11 to 14, in which the pressure-sensitive switch is a piezoelectric switch.

17. Apparatus according to any one of claims 11 to 14, in which the pressure-sensitive element is a pressure-sensitive resistive combination operating with an applied input voltage, said combination varying its electrical characteristics in response to pressure applied thereon.

18. Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the pressure-sensitive resistive combination forms a resistor bridge.

19. Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the pressure-sensitive resistive combination is a pressure-sensitive resistor.

20. Method of producing an activating signal by exerting pressure on a pressure-sensitive element, substantially as described and illustrated.

21. Pressure-sensitive switch apparatus, substantially as described and illustrated.

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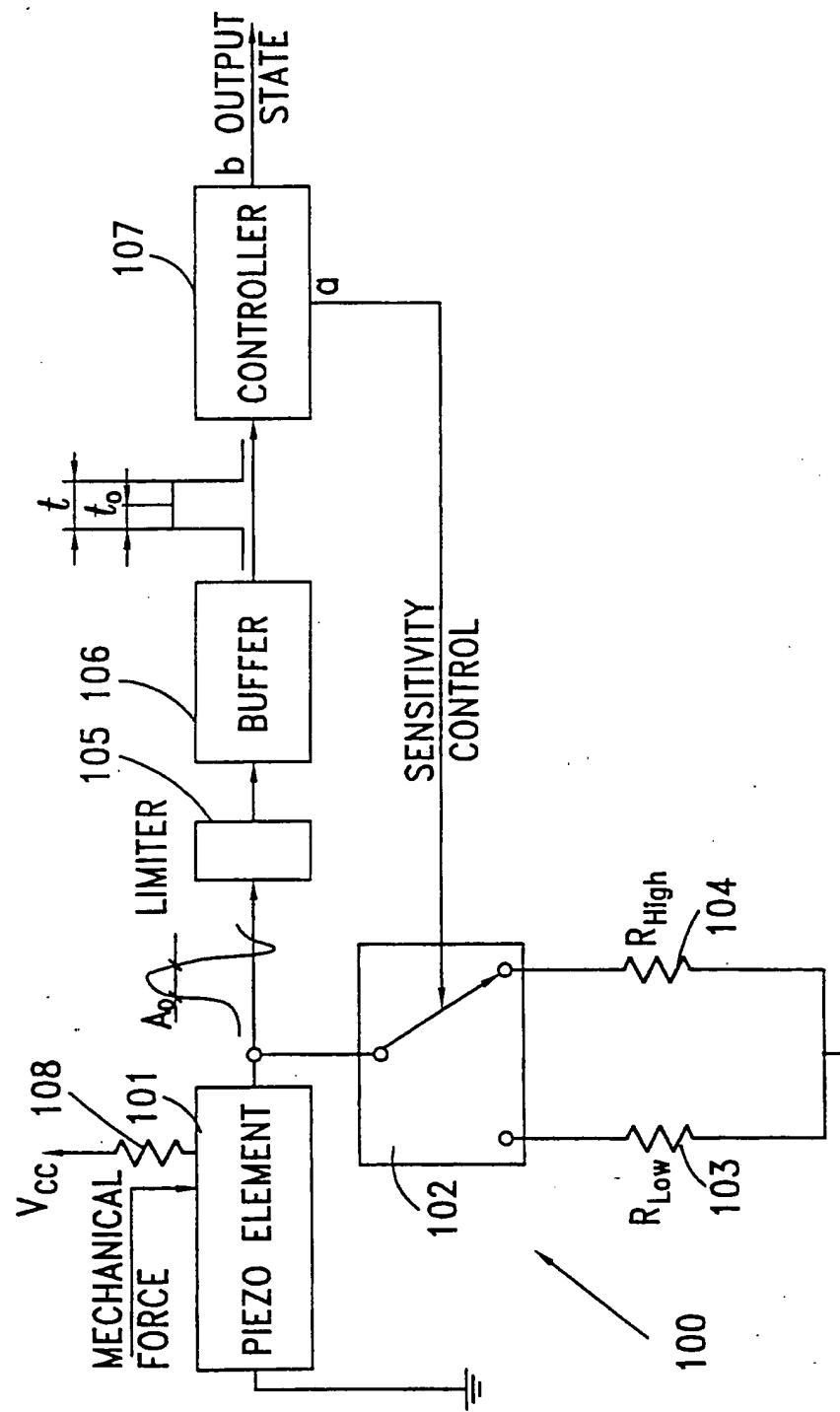


Fig. 1

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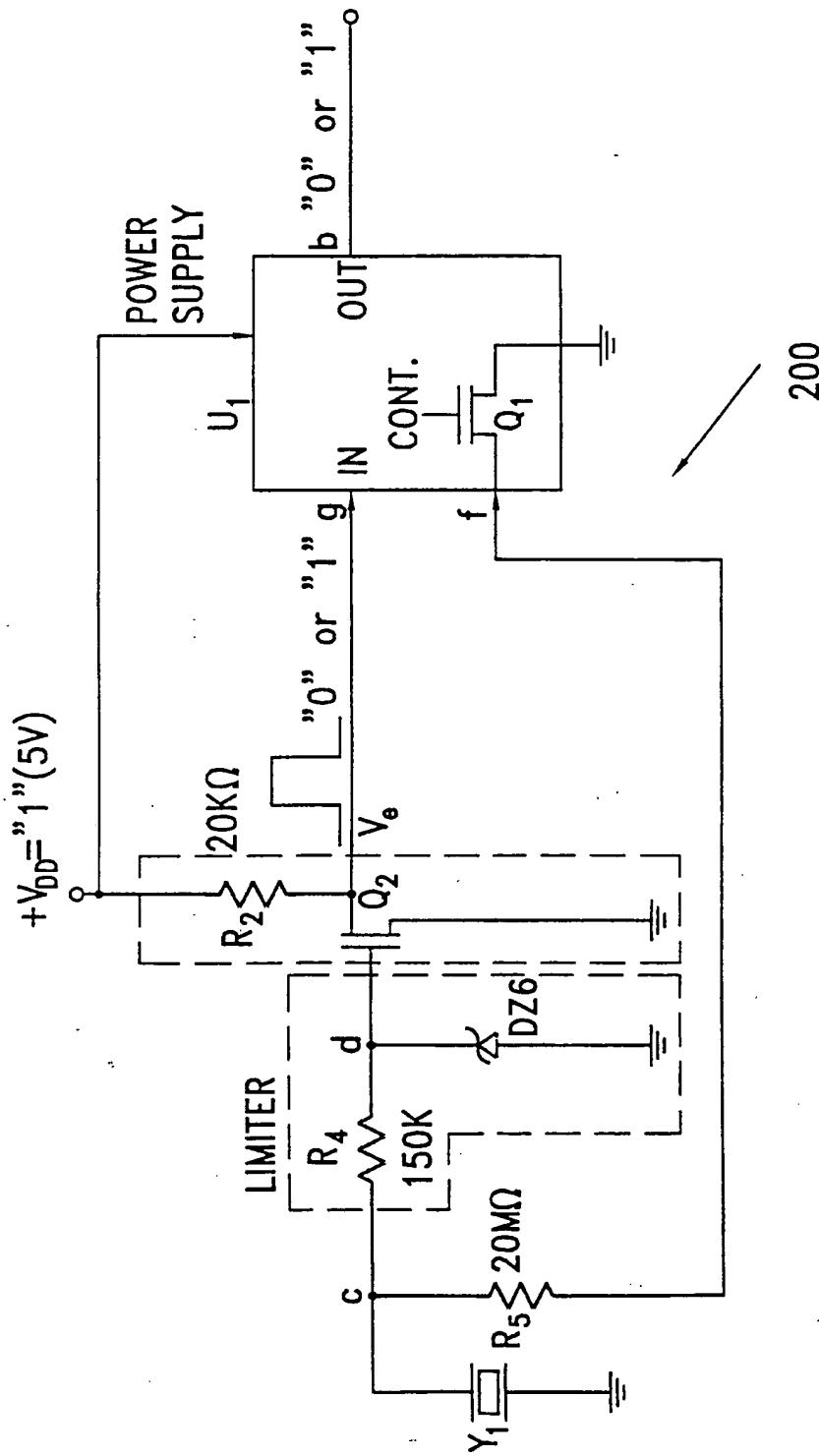


Fig. 2

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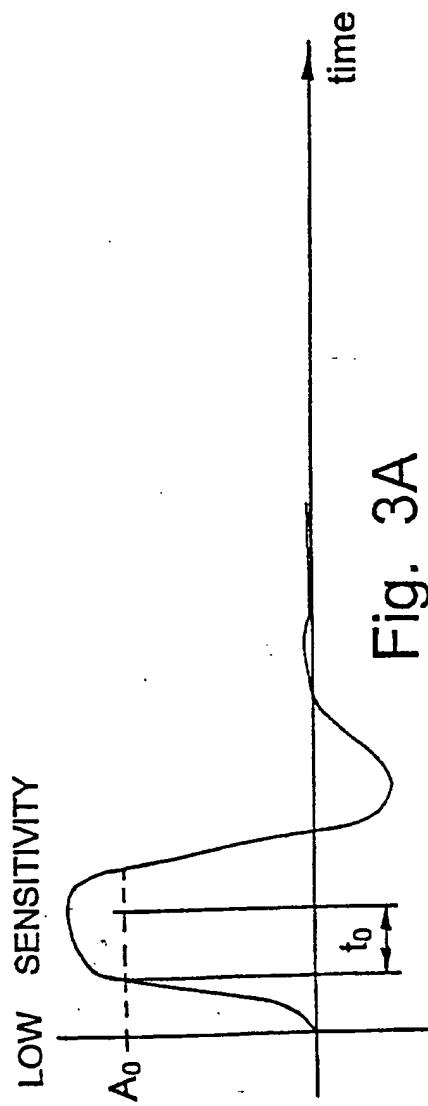


Fig. 3A

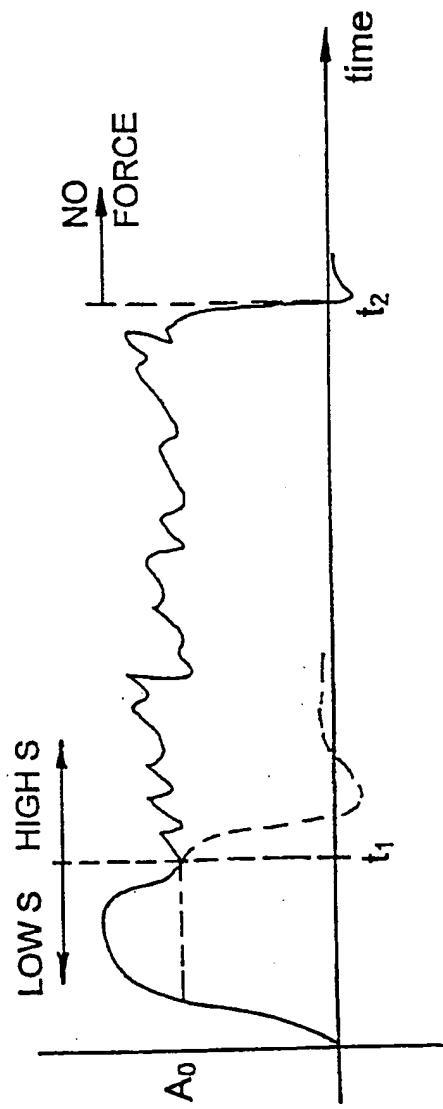


Fig. 3B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Application No
PCT/IL 00/00577

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 H03K17/96 H01H57/00 H01L41/04

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 H03K H01H H01L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ, INSPEC, IBM-TDB

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

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- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
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- *Z* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

• 13 February 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

20/02/2001

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No	
PCT/IL 00/00577	

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int'l. Application No.

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3. Method according to claim 1, comprising providing the switch of a derivation to its electronic circuit and passing it from the default to the transitory mode and vice versa by changing increasing and respectively decreasing the resistance of said derivation.

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CLAIMS

1. Method of producing an activating signal by exerting pressure on a pressure-sensitive element, which comprises the steps of:
 - 1 - providing an electronic circuit in which said pressure-sensitive element is inserted, that has two modes, a default mode and a transitory mode;
 - 2 - normally keeping said circuit in the default mode, in which it generates a primary activating signal, in the same manner and under the same conditions as a conventional pressure-sensitive switch, when an operator produces a primary pulse, having amplitude and duration not below predetermined thresholds, by applying pressure to the pressure-sensitive element;
 - 3 - when the primary activating signal has been generated, or concurrently with its generation, switching said circuit to the transitory mode, in which it generates secondary activating signals, in response to secondary pulses produced by pressures lower than the pressure that has produced said primary pulse; and
 - 4 - returning the electronic circuit to its default mode, when no secondary pulses have been produced for a predetermined period of time.
2. Method according to claim 1, wherein the pressure which produces the primary activating signal is the pressure of an operator's finger on the pressure-sensitive element and the pressures which produce the secondary activating signals are generated by vibrations of the operator's finger which continues to apply pressure to the pressure-sensitive element.